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SUBJECT: JERUSALEM MEDIA REACTION (01/07): GAZA - "A FASCIST WAR"

Main Stories:

The three papers lead with the January 6 "Israeli massacre" of displaced civilians who had sought refuge at a U.N. school in Jabaliyah refugee camp in the northern Gaza Strip. In photo coverage, Al Ayyam and Al Hayat Al Jadida run an oversized, graphic photo of a dead toddler, buried to her neck in the school rubble. Al Quds leads with a photo of medics carrying the body of a dead boy also killed on January 6. The papers report on the killing of 42-45 people at the U.N. school, bringing the death toll for January 6 to 100, 71 of whom were children and seven, women. Al Quds adds that UNRWA's flag was visible above the destroyed school and quotes an Israeli military spokesperson commenting that, "Israel was responding to Palestinian militants' fire." Al Hayat Al Jadida reports on additional families "killed beneath the rubble of their homes," bringing the total death toll for Palestinians since the start of Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip to 660, with approximately 3,000 injured. The paper also reports on the killing of five Israeli soldiers and injuring of 28 others, including a high ranking officer.

All papers front page statements by Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Fayyad condemning Israel's attack on the UNRWA school, calling the situation in Gaza, "an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe" and demanding an unconditional halt to the fighting, adding that the, "situation in Gaza cannot wait while the [UN] Security Council hesitates." Al Ayyam's front page reports on discussions in New York at the U.N. Security Council on Gaza fighting, highlighting PA President Abbas' demand for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. Al Quds' front page quotes Abbas' spokesman Rafiq Hussayni stating on January 6 that the PA will sue Israel for "war crimes" committed in Gaza. Finally, Al Quds and Al Ayyam front page a report that Israeli Prime Minister Olmert has agreed to open a humanitarian corridor into Gaza, to avoid a humanitarian crisis.

Al Quds' front page cites AFP in reporting that President Bush is proposing "tough" conditions for a ceasefire in Gaza. President Bush is quoted as demanding a durable ceasefire in Gaza under which Hamas will not be able to fire rockets from Gaza into Israel. President-elect Obama is also quoted on Al Quds' and Al Hayat Al Jadida's front pages, citing AFP, stating that lives lost in Gaza and Israel is "unfortunate" and that he will have, "a lot to say on the Middle East" once he assumes the presidency. Al Quds' inside page cites NBC in revealing that U.S. military engineering units have deployed on the Egyptian side of the Gaza Strip to monitor borders and detect smuggling tunnels.

Al Ayyam's front page cites news agencies in quoting Israeli Defense Minister Barak "acknowledging" that the Israeli army will face "difficulties" in Gaza operations, yet expressing Israel's determination to continue the "fighting" to the end. The paper and several local on-line news agencies also quote Palestinian analyst Wasif Erekat predicting that Israel will decide in the "next few hours" whether to accept a ceasefire or continue fighting. Erekat also noted that Israel is taking into account recent statements made by the Bush administration and incoming Obama administration over concern about the rising number of civilian casualties, according to the report.

Al Quds' front page cites news agencies in reporting on a proposal by Egyptian President Mubarak for a ceasefire, "for a limited time." The paper adds that French President Sarkozy has stated that he awaits Israel's response to Mubarak's initiative. Al Ayyam's front page reports that Palestinians and Americans "welcomed" Egypt's initiative and adds that a Hamas delegation is currently in Cairo to

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discuss Mubarak's initiative, before bringing it back to Hamas leaders in Damascus.

Al Quds republishes on an inside page the op-ed by John Bolton titled, "The Three State Option" that first appeared in the Washington Post on January 5.

BLOCK QUOTES:

1) Al Quds editorial is titled, "Who will stop the killing of children and women in Gaza?" (01/07): "The Gaza Strip, that small, densely populated piece of Palestinian land that is under siege from all directions; from land, sea and air: Where can its citizens take shelter from the intensive Israeli shelling?... This mad war would have no justification if Israel had not besieged [blockaded] the Strip... When this war stops, the Israelis whose brutal military offensive has reached a dead end over the last two days, will realize that they made a mistake in sending their army to Gaza. Violence was not and never will be an effective way to settle political disputes."

2) Jawad Al Bashiti comments in Al Ayyam on a recent Al Jazeera interview with Israeli President Shimon Peres, under the title, "The 'war' logic in Peres explanation" (01/07): "Israel used the pretext of Palestinian rocket and projectile attacks that injured five people, to wage a fascist war on the Gaza Strip which has so far killed and injured more than 3,000 Palestinians, most of whom are civilians, and a majority of whom, are children and women ...Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas did well in declaring that the Palestinian Authority will not return to the [administration of the] Rafah crossing, if its return is part of a new reality that Israel is trying to create [in Gaza] through its fascist war - a war on all the Palestinian people."

WALLES